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AUTHOR Moxnes, Kari
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ABSTRACT

The opinion that divorce is more painful and difficult for men than for women is widespread among both professionals and the public. This issue was examined in a study involving 50 divorced men and 44 divorced women in Trondheim, Norway. Interviews were conducted with respondents and the difficulty and pain of divorce were measured in part by each respondent's descriptions of depression, desperation, sadness, and anger. In addition, subjects' use of stimulants or tranquilizers, their illness, hospitalizations, and their absences from work were studied. The results revealed that men and women acted and reacted in very similar ways. Both sexes reported being depressed, desperate, sad, and angry during their divorce. The main difference between men and women was not in how they reacted to divorce, but in the stage of the process when they had reactions. The majority of women, but only a few men, reported that the time before separation had been most difficult. Men, more often than women, reported their most difficult time to be late in the divorce process, after the actual separation or divorce. Who initiates the divorce, reasons for the divorce, and help from family, friends, and professionals are all factors to consider in studying the divorce process. For the men in this study, the divorce process was different than for women, but in most cases it was not more painful or difficult. (NB)

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HIS AND HER DIVORCE

Kari Moxnes
Institute of Sociology
University of Trondheim
Norway
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His and Her Divorce

> "Marriage is like a lobster pot, attractive and easy to enter, but painful and sometimes impossible to leave" (slightly rewritten from Bohmer and Lebow 1978).

Introduction

> "You know divorce is much worse for men than for women. Once a man has tried married life he is unable to manage on his own, he is dependent on a woman to take care of his daily cores" (quotation from an older, experienced family counsellor, Trondheim, 1981).

This quotation expresses an opinion that is widespread among professionals and ordinary people, that most men experience divorce in a worse and more harmful way than most women. In recent years I have met such opinions so often that I have decided it's time to check if this opinion has any roots in reality.

Having interviewed 134 divorced men and women, and talked to some hundred more, I was of the opinion that divorce was just as painful and difficult for women as for men. At the same time I could understand why so many believed it was worse for men. Men and women have different kinds of divorce processes, their processes are not synchronous. In most cases it is the woman who initiates the divorce, that wants to get out of wedlock. The woman wants to leave a marriage that she feels has functioned less well for her than for her husband. She is usually well prepared and has control over the divorce process. For most women there is an orderly divorce process with the most difficult phase in the process often occurring before the legal separation when they are making the decission to get a divorce. Most men have an unorderly divorce process, the most difficult phase in the process is usually the time around and after factual separation, a time when most men live alone and receive little or no support from relatives and friends.

Data

The data for this paper is taken from a study of parental cooperation after divorce, done in Trondheim county during 1981-1987.

A population of 370 parents with children 15 years old and younger, divorced in 1980 were invited to participate in the study. 148 wanted to take part and from this group I picked out 94 divorcees, 50 men and 44 women. (The sample contains 30 former couples.) Mye aim was to construct a theoretical sample with considerable variation on important variables like: social background, duration of marriage, number of children, childrens' age and civil status one year after the divorce. I was able to construct the desired sample. The respondents were interviewed in

1981. Data was collected through in depth interviews. The average interviewing time was 3 hours and 20 minutes. Much work was put in to testing the reliability of the interviews. By comparing the 60 interviews of former spouses we found that there were only a few and small differences in their story. The former spouses had told the same "story", but in most cases they had experienced that "story" differently. The main ide of this study is to analyze the process that takes place when a family is altered by divorce (Noxnes 1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1985).

Divorce as a process

Legally defined divorce is an event that takes place at a certain time, either by a court-order or by the granting of a license. Sociologically defined divorce is a process that usually starts long before the spouses move apart and often ends long after legal divorce.

It is elementary sociological knowledge that when studying a phenomena, the results are dependent on who you get your information from, the methods and measurements used when collecting data, the level of experience and knowledge among those doing the research, and of course how the field of research is defined.

When family counsellors, especially those with the right to give formal mediation (in Norway you have to go to an officially appointed mediater before you can be granted a licence for separation by the county-governor), believe that divorce is a worse experience for men than for women, it is reasonable to think that this is a result of the fact that these people usually meet the spouses at the time of the breakup. Family counsellors, other professionals that work with separated and divorced people, and ordinary people usually base their opinions as to how men and women act and react to divorce on obervations made in the later phases of the process. They see how separated and divorced people act, but seldom do they see how people with marriage problems and people who are trying to make up their minds to divorce behave. Their behavior is hidden in the private life of the family, and if someone observes this behavior it is usually defined as personal problems or common marriage problems. A number of sociological studies show that divorce is a worse and more difficult problem for men than women. Quite a few of these studies use only data from the time of separation and/or legal divorce. They have studied only a small part of a rather long process. (For use of and/or criticism of this approach see Bloom 1978, 1981, Robertson 1979, Jacobson 1983, Chiriboga 1978, Ahrons 1984, Rodgers 1984.)

It is not satisfactory to study only one or a few of the last phases of the divorce process. Wanting to compare men's and women's divorce experiences one has to compare the whole process they have been living through. To do that the best thing would be a longitudinal study. But for obvious reasons a sample of married people who will decide to divorce sometime in the future is difficult to obtain. The next best thing is to use a combination of retrospective data from the married years and data collected after the spouses moved apart. It is a study of this later kind that I have done.

Before I start investigating if divorce is a worse and more difficult experience for men than for women, or if men just have another kind of divorce-process than women, I need to explain how these underlined words are to be understood in this context.

Divorce is a worse and more difficult experience for men than for women if the men's presentation of their story contains more and stronger words describing acts and reactions that are usually considered negative for the person himself.

Divorce is a different kind of process for men than for women if men live through the many phases of the process at different points in time than women. I take for granted that both men and women live through the same phases.

Experiencing a divorce

To measure how difficult and painful the divorce had been I chose to use the respondent's descriptions of depression, desperation, sadness and anger, but also their use of stimulating/tranquilizing drugs, their illnesses, hospitalizations and their absence from the workplace.

I remind the reader that the sample consists of 44 women and 50 men. Most women (30) and men (42) had been "desperately depressed", "very depressed". or "seriously depressed" during at least one period in the process. For many (29 women and 26men) this period of depression had been followed by a period when they felt mentally paralyzed, and were unable to do anything to better their own situation. Thereafter some (22 women and 27 men) had gone through a phase were they were angry, mad or agressive before they learned to accept or be happy about the divorce.

Measured in this way, there is hardly any difference in the men's and women's experiences. Both sexes had been desperate, depressed, sad and angry. Only one reaction showed a striking difference between the sexes, that of becoming shocked.

Many men (24) but only a few women (6) said that they had been in some kind of shock when the final dicision to divorce had been reached. None of these people were shocked because they had never talked or heard about divorce before, or because the situation was new and unknown to them, but simply because the seriousness of the situation never really sunk in before. I will return to this difference again later.

A simple comparison of the use of drugs shows small differences between the sexes. Almost half of the respondents had used one or more kinds of drugs during the divorce process. Some had smoked more than usual (10 women and 9 men), some had used more alcohol (8 women and 17 men), and some used different kinds of drugs (13 women and 20 men).

This picture is not changed when studying their physical or mental health. Half of the respondents had been so depressed or worn out for a period of time that they used the word "ill" when describing their own situation. Some (5 women and 13 men) had

been absent from work for a long period of time, some (2 women and 10 men) had been hospitalized and 5 men had tried to kill themselves.

When analysing the divorce process as a whole by making simple additions of the respondents' statements, the main finding is that men and women act and react in very similar ways. The differences between the sexes are small, even if a few more men than women had been deeply depressed, had used more alcohol and other kinds of drugs, were hospitalized more often and only men had tried to end their own life.

The respondents were also asked what phase in the divorce process they had found to be most difficult, and how long this most difficult phase had lasted. The results show that there was no difference between the sexes as to how long the most difficult phase had lasted. Most of the respondents had been through what they themselves considered a very difficult period of one half to one year.

As to what phase in the process they considered to be most difficult, there is a striking difference between men and women. The majority of women (26) but only a few men (8) said that the time before the spouses moved apart had been most difficult. In that period of time they had been desperate, depressed and/or angry, when the breakup did come they reacted with relief. The majority of men on the other hand, said that the most difficult phase in the process had been the time around and after factual separation.

The main difference between men and women is not so much <u>how</u> they react to divorce, but <u>when</u> they have those reactions. Men's and women's divorce processes were unsynchronus. It is not right to say that the divorce process is worse and more difficult for men than for women, but it is right to say that men more often than women have the most difficult time late in the process, when they are in fact separated or divorced.

Whether and why women have a different divorce process than men can be studied by dividing up the process in different phases that are studied one by one.

<u>Divorce, an unsynchronous process</u>

William Goode (1956) divides the divorce process into 4 stages of decision:

1. The first serious discussion about divorce
2. The final decision to divorce
3. The application for divorce
4. Getting a divorce

(Translated from English.(years ago) to Norwegian and back to English, Goode's own words got lost.)

I will use Goode's stages in the hope that they will bring out similarities and differences in the men's and womin's divorce process.

The decision to divorce is a hard and painful one to make for most people. Usually they use months or years to reach a final decision. Very often one or both spouses think, dream and plan for divorce for months before they talk about it to the other spouse. When divorce has become a subject of discussion, it is often the case that one of the spouses already has decided that either the marriage must be changed dramatically or it must be ended. But even when one of the spouses has decided to divorce, it usually takes a lot of time before the final decision is reached.

From the first serious discussion of divorce to the reaching of a decision either by the spouses together or by one spouse alone, most people use months. In this sample some had discussed divorce for 3-4 years before they were able to make up their minds. The women usually used more time on this decision than the men. Some women (23) and some men (14) used more than a year to make this decision.

After having decided to divorce, most respondent used some more months before they moved apart. Approximately 2/3 of the sample lived together for more than a month after the final decision. The amount of time taken to move out varies greatly, some moved out after an hour others after a couple of years. Those who moved apart shortly after the final decision were usually those who fled a shared dwelling in anger or despair. Those who used more time used that time to prepare the children for the near future, to set up a separation contract and to find new homes for one or both spouses.

Again the results show that women usually used more time than men on this part of the process.

Goode (1956) considered the decisioon to apply for separation or divorce as an important stage in the process. That was not the case for most of these respondents. Many waited for months before they applied for legal separation, some waited so long because they felt there was no hurry, others because they were afraid to hurt their spouse who at that time was very depressed. Compared to the factual separation many considered the legal separation as a mere formality.

In Norway, most people get divorced by obtaining first a separation - then a divorce - licence. Very few get divorced in court. You have to be legally separated at least a year before you can get a divorce licence. The average separation time in this sample was one year and 5 months. Those couples who agreed to a divorce had a shorter time of separation than those who did not agree.

For most of the respondents the application for and the receiving of the divorce licence was only an official acknowledgement of something that they felt had taken place a long time before. But for some, mostly men, this was a difficult period in the process. It was the time when they were forced to realize that their marriage was in fact over.

All of the respondents, whether they had made the decision themselves or had to accept their partner's decision, had been through the stages Goode describes, in that way there is no difference between men and women. But there are differences when we look at the time they used on the decisions, who decided and when they decided.

The women usually used more time than men on the different stages of decision. The main explanation for this difference can be found by comparing the interviews with former spouses. What women considered to be the first serious divorce discussion or the final decision to divorce often took place a long time before those occations that the husbands considered likewise.

Goode's stages of decision are useful when studying time differences in men's and women's decision making, but unsuitable for explaining why men and women have such differences in their divorce process. In the following I will try to exlain some of these differences. I find it reasonable to expect that who initiated the divorce, the level of satisfaction with the marriage and whether one had an orderly or an unorderly divorce will be important variables in explaining the differences.

Women take the initiative in the divorce

As already mentioned the time before and around the actual separation was the most difficult time for most women. During this period, most women felt depressed, were sad and/or angry. It was also in this phase that some women used drugs, felt ill, had to stay away from their work and two of them entered psychiatric wards.

This was not the most difficult time for the majority of men. Many men were shocked when their wives asked for divorce, moved out of the home or asked the man to leave the home. For most men the time around and after factual separation was the worst phase in the process. It was in this phase that most men were depressed, sad or angry, that they used drugs, were ill and were hospitalized.

The time differences in the divorce process of men and women and the fact that many men were shocked when divorce was decided makes it clear that an important issue in explaining the differences must be which person it is that wants the divorce.

Research done in recent years shows that the majority of divorces are initiated by the wife (Koch Nielsen 1985, Ahrons 1985, Weeda 1985, Moxnes 1981a, 1981b, 1985, Kristiansen 1976, Zeiss, Zeiss & Johnson 1980). In this sample the divorce was initiated by the woman alone in most cases (72 out of 94), by the man alone in a few cases (9) and by the couple together in some cases (13). There is no great difference in the answers men and women gave to this question. The men confirmed what the women said, even if a few more men than women said that the couple together had initiated the divorce.

It is an old but widespread misconception (which you can even find among sociologists) that it is not the woman but usually the

man who wants to quit the marriage. According to their view it only looks as if it is the woman who initiates the divorce while in reality it is the man. But the man is supposed to be using strategies which are hard for us to accept. Either he is being a gentleman and leaving to the woman to make the formal request for divorce, or he is making life so uncomfortable for his wife that she is forced to ask for a divorce.

My studies show quite the contrary. The majority of men (26) and women (24) said that the men had actively tried to prevent or delay the separation or divorce. Only a few (1 woman and 2 men) spoke of the same kind of reaction from women.

Perhaps the reason why most men experience divorce and espesially the later parts of the process as more difficult than women is because they valued their marriages more highly than their wives did. One explanation could then be that men suffer more than women becuase they are often forced to leave a marriage they find satisfying and that they wnat to continue. One other explanation could be that since most men did not want a divorce they were much less prepared for divorce and consequently had a harder time after the breakup. Family research has shown that marriage functions better for men than women (Durkheim 1978, Bernard 1976) and divorce research has found that men often have a more positive opinion of their former marriage than women (Koch-Nielsen 1985).

Women have more reasons for divorce

Bernard's book (1976): "The future of Marriage" shows how differently men and women experience married life, so differently, in fact, that it justifies asking if men and women want and need two different kinds of marriage.

There were important differences in how men and women valued their marriage in this sample. Most women (39) had had serious marriage problems in about half of their married life (approximately 5 to 6 years), but only half of the men (24) spoke of similar problems. Similar results are found in a Danish study (Koch-Nielsen 1984). By comparing the former couples we find that the husbands often considered their marriages to be better and better for a longer period of time than their wives. Analyses of the sharing of work in the home makes it clear that many men had good reasons to be more satisfied than their female counterpart! (Moxnes 1984a).

The respondents' reasons for divorce are often important sources for understanding their former marriage. Most women named a higher number of reasons for divorce than the men (women 8.8 reasons, men 6.3 reasons on average). Some men had no reasons of their own, they did not want to end the marriage. When asked they talked about the reasons their wives had had. The most commonly mentioned reasons were: "did not fit together", "had grown apart", and "had nothing in common any more" (Kristiansen 1976, Koch-Nielsen 1983). Such reasons are extremely general, and most interesting for a study of how the socially acceptable reasons or labels for divorce change over time. When studying divorce it is necessary to go behind these labels to find out what the respon-

dents really had in mind when using them. Often when women said that the couple had grown apart what they really meant was that their husband had never changed, he never grew up. When men used the same phrase they often meant that their wife had changed too much, she had become a different person than the one he had married.

Adultery is another often mentioned reason. Half of the respondents said that adultery had been an important or the most important reason for divorce. Adultery was a more important reason for men than for women, and for those who had been deceived than for those who had been adulterous. Almost as many women as men had been engaged in extramarital relationships, but the men had a higher number of such relationships than the women.

The main difference between men's and women's reasons for divorce are found in the fact that almost all women but only a few men talked about a lack of equality between the spouses. Most women (39) said that theiir husbands had not treated them as equals, many (29) said that they had been used, exploited or oppressed by their husband. Some women (13) had also been physically abused by their spouse. Lack of equality, oppression, exploitation and physical abuse, in other words, the man's suppression of the woman, was the most important reason for divorce among the women. This came as no surprise, but only a few men mentioned any such reason for divorce. None of them said that they had been suppressed by their wives either.

When looking back the majority of men knew that the sharing of responsibilities and work in the home had been unequally shared, and that the way it had been divided had favoured themselves.

One can specualte if it is so that a couple's relationship is more important to a woman than a man as well as to whether women have greater expectations of intimacy, closeness and fellowship in a relationship so that they are therefore more easily disappointed than menn are. At any rate, when citing reasons for getting a divorce, women put more emmphasis on these expectations not being met than men did. On the other hand, men often emphasized that their wives had unrealistic expectations of how dose and intimate a relationship could be and continue to be over an extended period of time. They felt that over the years it is unavoidable that married life becomes more of a habit for each other, that the erotic exitement disappears and that their wives "nagging" about openess and intimacy becomes a strain. Quite a few men said that their expectations of their partner's role as a wife, housewife and mother were often disappointed. Men felt that their spouses had not put as much effort and work into these fields as they had expected them to.

The women's dissatisfaction with the couple relationship, both the lack of openness and intimacy and men not being involved in household tasks, can be understood as an indication that women expect a modern, egalitarian marriage. The men's dissatisfaction with their women as wife, housekeeper and mothers can be understood as an indication that the men wanted a more traditional marriage.

The fact that the men at the same time had greater satisfaction out of the marriage can be seen as an indication that they were in fact living in traditional marriages which functioned better for them than for their wives (Christensen 1986).

The men getting a greater satisfaction out of the marriage is important for explaining why men reacted somewhat more strongly than women did in the divorce process and most of all why they reacted so strongly during the period following the factual separation.

Orderly - unorderly divorce

Hagestad and Smyer (1982) found that control over the divorce process, what they called an orderly or unorderly divorce process was important in explaining the divorcee's situation after divorce. Those who had an orderly divorce, who had prepared themselves mentally and practically and who decided themselves when to proceed to the next stage in the process were much better off after the legal divorce than those who had an unorderly process.

The women I have studied had in most cases an orderly divorce. They had prepared themselves mentally for months and even years, by talking with family, friends and professionals, and practically by getting more education, getting a job or by changing to a new and better paid job. They controlled the process because it was usually they who had initiated the divorce. They made appointments with the family counsellors or with the mediators. They picked up the applications for separation at the county governor's office and they filled out the papers.

Most men had an uncontrolled process. They had seldom prepared themselves for a future as a divorcee. Even some of those men that had an extramarital relationship for months before the separation said that they had not wanted a divorce and consequently had done nothing to prepare themselves. Only a few men can be said to have controlled the process from the beginning, but some gained control after a while, often by delaying the process.

At the time the spouses moved apart the following situations were typical:

The women:

1. They had gone through the most difficult phase of the process.
2. They were well prepared for the time of separation and divorce.
3. They had to a large degree cut the emotional ties to the spouse. In Bohannan's (1971) words they had completed the psychological divorce.
4. They had a high degree of control over those phases of the process that lay ahead of them.

The men:

1. They had just started on the most difficult phase of the process.
2. They were not well prepared for the time of separation and divorce.
3. They had seldom cut the emotional ties to the spouse.
4. Most of them had little if any control over the phases in the process that lay ahead of them.

With such different situations at the time of factual separation, it is no wonder that men more often than women had a hard time in the years of separation and after the legal divorce.

Some of the differences in the men's and women's divorce process can be explained by a difference in degree of preparedness and control over the divorce process. Whether control over the process is only necessary, and not a sufficient variable in explaining these differences can't be answered by the use of a sample like the present one. To do that it is necessary to use a sample consisting of a larger group of men who initiated the divorce themselves and a larger group of women who did not want a divorce.

Those male respondents that had initiated the divorce themselves or together with their wives had a divorce process that was much more equal to the one most women had. Those men that lived in the same household as their wives for a longer period of time after the final decision to divorce had more control over the process and less strong and short lasting negative reactions after separation. This might indicate that control over the process is a more important variable than gender in explaining the process differences. But Hagestad and Smyer (1982) did find that women, even when they did not want to divorce, more often than men managed to have some control over the process.

Help from family, friends and professionals

Another important difference between men and women is found when studying the way they sought and received help from family members, friends and professionals. These differences can explain both process differences between the sexes but also why so many men have a hard time after factual separation.

Most people need support, help and advice at some time in their divorce process. We know that the social network is of importance as to how the divorcees cope with the new situation (Stephen 1984, Daniels-Mohring & Berger 1984, Weeda 1985). Most women (38) and men (42) had sought help from professionals one or more times. Many respondents (39 women and 32 men) sought and received help from relatives and almost all women but only 1/4 of the men were helped by friends.

The majority of both men and women had been in contact with professionals. Just as many women as men had seen family counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists and lawyers, but how they used this kind of help and when they did it variates. It was typical for the men that they sought help from professionals once or a few times in the period around and after the breakup. It was

typical for the women to seek such help some or many times before the breakup.

The women had usually informed friends and relatives about their marriage problems and their plans for divorce before the spouses moved apart, only a few men had done the same. Most men sought help from and informed relatives and friends after the factual separation.

Most men are not used to talking about personal problems, therefore only a few of the men sought help and advice from friends. Some of those that did had the sad experience of being turned down. Unwilling to discuss personal problems, these friends suggested that it was better to go out and look for fun; to pick up some women, or to get "stoned".

Without exaggerating too much one might say that men and women develop two different but typical ways of behaving in the most difficult phases of the process. Typically the men try to avoid thinking and talking about divorce by keeping themselves active all the time. Some worked "day and night", others took to jogging or some other sports, some built or rebuilt a house or a cabin and a few went to restaurants looking for fun almost every night.

The positive aspect of the male way of behaving is that they keep active and take part in life. The negative aspect is that some of them work so hard to avoid the problems and to keep active that they collapse after a while totally worn ut both mentally and physically.

Most women use very much time thinking and talking about their problems. They discuss them with friends, family members, colleagues and professionals. The negative aspect of the typical female way of behaving is that for a period of time some seem to be totally unable to think and talk about anything but divorce. They often become passive and isolate themselves from social life. The positive aspect of the female way of behavior is that most of them managed to work through the problems thoroughly, and that by their constantly talking about divorce they had a lot of help and advice through the whole process. This can be one main reason why women often are better prepared and have more control of the divorce process than men.

Do men loose more by divorcing?

It is a commonly held belief that men loose more than women when divorcing. This opinion is based on the fact that most children remain with the mother after divorce. It is also a widespread belief that most men loose their home and are economically ruined by heavy child-support payments.

Whether the men in this sample had additional problems because they feared that they would lose more than their wives can't be answered by the exisiting data.

For many men moving away from their children had been one of the hardest experiences in the process. Quite a few had been afraid that they would lose contact with their children. Almost no man

mentioned worries about unfairly divided property or too high child-support payments.

Most men lost the daily contact with their children, but only a few lost all contact which they chose to do themselves. Most children lived in the mother's household, but in 22 of 94 cases the children lived more or just as much with the father as with the mother.

Most parents had some kind of visitation arrangement, but only 1/3 had an arrangement that equals what is called "common" or "extended visitation" in Norway. The reason why so many had non-extensive visitation arrangements are mainly to be found among the men. Quite a few men would not or could not have more extensive visitations arrangements for their children, some because their work made it impossible, some because they felt it to be emotionally hard on themselves. More fathers than mothers were satisfied with the existing visitation arrangement, and more mothers than fathers wanted a more extensive system.

We did find that those men who had used a lot of their time and energy on the children while married continued to do so after divorce, while those fathers who had less contact with the children before separation had even less contact after divorce.

Moving away from the home you have had for years can add extra hardship to an already painful divorce process. That was something both men and women experienced. A Danish study shows that the woman had to move out of the shared dwelling just as often as the man (Koch-Nielsen 1983). Who is going to keep the house or apartment is of course dependent on who is keeping the children, but also on the economic situation of each of the spouses. In Scandinavia a couple have invested so much of their capital in their home, that only those who are well off can afford to keep an expensive house and pay the other spouse one half of the property's value.

In 45 of 94 cases the women kept the dwelling (mostly appartments) and in 21 cases the man did so. 49 mothers and 73 fathers moved out of what had been their home for years.

The men did not become financially ruined by unjust divorce settlements or by high child-support payments. Most divorce settlements were just, and the child support payments were usually very low. More men than women were satisfied both with the dividing of property and with the size of the child support. One year after legal divorce most men were better off economically than their former wives (Moxnes 1984a).

The man's difficult situation after separation can therefore hardly be explained by them losing more economically than the women, but the loss of daily contact with the children undoubtedly made the divorce very difficult for some men.

Conclusions

The results from the studies I have done show that divorce is not a worse and more difficult experience for men than for women. Men

and women act and react in the same ways, even if the men more often than the women show stronger and more negative reactions, such as serious depression and suicide attempts. This difference can in part be a result of what is called gender typical behavior; it is both expected and accepted that men show more destructive and violent behavior than women. The main cause is still the difference in the way they live through the divorce process. The most difficult time for most men was the time around and after factual separation. At this point in the process the men often lived alone and had few contacts with family and friends. The men's social situation at this phase in the process can both strengthen his problems and make the problems more visible to other people. The majority of women lived through the most difficult phase in their process at a time when they were still married and lived in their home.

Quite often when the women divorced, they were leaving a marriage that had not functioned well for them for a considerable length of time, they wanted a divorce. By consulting with friends, family and professionals, they had prepared themselves for the divorce and they were in control of the process. In most cases they knew that their chances of retaining the children were good, however at the same time they knew that financially they had a demanding and difficult time ahead of them when they would need to work a lot.

Often when the men divorced they felt they were being forced to do so. Because they didn't want to divorce they were less prepared and many felt powerless in relation to the process. Most men knew that they had to part from the children, but few of them had been afraid of any considerable effect on their financial and/or work situation.

For the men the divorce process was different than for the women, but in most cases not more painful or difficult. While the women had most difficulties before and at the time of separation, most men had their hardest time at and after the separation.

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